

DAILY BULLETIN

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RUSSIAN VETO "INDEED A POSSIBILITY"

Asked about news reports that Russian officials are threatening a veto in the U.N. Security Council on the amended resolution on Iraq before the council, Fleischer noted that Russia's foreign minister "has indicated that that is a possibility."

President Bush "certainly hopes that it will not come to that from the Russian point of view. The president would be very disappointed if Russia were to take a stand that would be a setback not only for peace, because it's important to immediately disarm Saddam Hussein, but also for the freedom and the liberty of the Iraqi people," Fleischer said.

"It's worth remembering what happened to the people of Kosovo and it's worth remembering what happened to the people of Rwanda. The United Nations has previously sat on the sidelines as people died and as injustice was done as a result of vetoes or veto threats from other nations. If they (Russia) were to veto, which is indeed a possibility, it would be, from a moral point of view, more than a disappointment," Fleischer said.

"The president would look at this as a missed opportunity for Russia to take an important moral stand to defend freedom and prevent the risk of a massive catastrophe from taking place as a result of Saddam

Hussein's development of weapons of mass destruction."

U.S. CONCERNED BY REPORTS OF IRAQI UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES

The White House is aware of the reports of the discovery of Iraqi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) by UNMOVIC, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, Fleischer said.

The U.S. is also aware of UNMOVIC's discovery of Iraqi production of munitions capable of dispensing both chemical and biological weapons, he said.

"In the case of the UAVs, we understand that it's a drone with a 24-foot wingspan as well as a second undeclared vehicle; they were constructed from converted L-29 drop tanks for Iraqi aircraft. UNSCOM has discovered that Iraq has used modified drop tanks to spray simulated anthrax in past tests."

Fleischer said that apart from the fact that the tanks can transport chemical or biological weapons, the reported fuel capacities of the drones might permit them to violate the 150-kilometer range limitation for such craft imposed on Iraq.

The United States expects to learn, at a closed-door meeting of the U.N. Security Council March 10, why the discovery of the undeclared weapons delivery systems was not addressed in weapons inspector Hans Blix's March 7 oral report to the council.

"This was part of an appendix that was added very, very late by Hans Blix to the document that was submitted in writing, and really was not talked about at the U.N. last Friday," Fleischer said. "This was not part of that original report in full. There is some interest in knowing why this was not part of the oral report. There could be a number of explanations, and we look forward to hearing what they could be."

"NO SECRET" FRANCE COURTING VOTES AGAINST IRAQ RESOLUTION

According to news reports, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin spent the weekend lobbying Security Council members Angola, Cameroon and Guinea to grant Iraq more time to comply with U.N. disarmament demands.

"It's no secret," Fleischer told reporters, that "the French

have been working against this resolution for a considerable amount of time. It's also worth remembering that when it came to the resolution that created the inspectors and UNMOVIC in the first place, neither France nor Russia supported the creation of the inspectors to begin with."

BUSH MAKES SERIES OF PHONE CALLS ON IRAQ, NORTH KOREA

President Bush made a series of phone calls to a number of foreign leaders March 10 to discuss the situation in North Korea and the upcoming vote in the United Nations Security Council on Iraq, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer told reporters at his early morning and early afternoon briefings.

Fleischer said early in the day Bush phoned China's President Jiang Zemin, Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, South African President Thabo Mbeki, and the Sultan of Oman, Said bin Said Al Qaboos, and was expected to phone other leaders before the day was over.

Secretary of State Colin Powell also was making phone calls to his foreign minister counterparts, Fleischer said.

PROLIFERATION GROWING PROBLEM FOR WORLD

"We have long been concerned about both North Korea and Iran's development of nuclear weapons. We've been warning about both," Fleischer said. "This is one of the reasons the president, in the State of the Union (address), referred to Iraq, Iran and North Korea as 'the axis of evil.' It's because of their willing desire to flaunt international accords in pursuit of nuclear weapons. Their pursuit of them began quite some time ago. It is a worldwide problem. It is also why it is so important for the United Nations to be effective against Iraq. If the United Nations is not able to enforce non-proliferation agreements around the world, proliferators will celebrate," Fleischer said.

"Proliferation is a growing problem for the world to face, as North Korea and Iran are proving," he said.

SECURITY COUNCIL VOTE PUSHED TO LATER IN THE WEEK

Negroponte: We will not ask for a vote March 11
By Judy Aita
Washington File U.N. Correspondent

United Nations -- The United States will not ask the U.N. Security Council to vote on its draft resolution on Iraq until later in the week, U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte said March 10.

On his way to a private council meeting, Negroponte said "I think it is highly unlikely that we'll have a vote on the resolution tomorrow (March 11). What I intend to suggest to the other delegates ... that we be prepared to vote on the resolution sometime later this week, but not tomorrow."

U.K. Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, whose government co-sponsored the resolution along with the United States and Spain, echoed his colleague's sentiment and said that the co-sponsors are working to forge majority support for the draft resolution.

The three sponsors have amended the draft resolution they originally put forward in late February. The amendment would set a March 17 deadline for Iraq to comply with Security Council disarmament demands. France, China and Russia, permanent members of the council with veto power, say they do not accept the compromise.

The draft currently says that "Iraq will have failed to take the final opportunity afforded by resolution 1441 unless on or before March 17, 2003, the council concludes that Iraq has demonstrated full, unconditional, immediate and active cooperation with its disarmament obligations."

Six non-permanent members of the council, which are undecided on the draft resolution, have urged the permanent members to compromise and are working to that end. They are drafting their own amendment that would change the deadline and include timelines for the completion of each disarmament requirement.

The undecided members are Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico, and Pakistan.

Greenstock said that the resolution's co-sponsors are "working very hard to see if there are proposals and continue to try and create a majority in the council for a way forward."

Greenstock said that the United Kingdom delegation has "nothing to add to draft resolution, no instruction to suggest any changes."

Negroponte said that U.S. officials are "still working to try to forge the necessary support for the draft resolution."

"The most important point that I can make is that we remain convinced that Iraq is not in compliance with its obligations under [Security Council Resolution] 1441 and that if it fails to disarm peacefully it will have to be disarmed by force. That is the essence of our position," the U.S. ambassador said.

Negroponte said that he is also going to bring up the issue of Iraqi experiments with unmanned drones with a range in excess of 150 kilometers.

The Iraqi activities were revealed in a new report being prepared by the U.N. weapons inspectors on 29 "clusters" of unresolved Iraqi disarmament issues in the fields of chemical and biological weapons and missiles. Hans Blix, executive director of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), gave council members a first accounting of the 29 sets of issues in a report of over 150 pages on March 7. The weapons inspectors are required to present a report for the council by the end of March on the issues, how they will be handled, and when those disarmament tasks could be completed.

Negroponte pointed out that "paragraph 3 of resolution 1441 states very clearly that Iraq has an obligation to declare various types of vehicles and aircraft and so forth, including unmanned aerial vehicles of all types. The fact that this was not initially declared is another example of Iraq's failure to have told the truth with respect to its holdings when it submitted its declaration on the 7th of December."

"In addition, it would appear that this unmanned aerial vehicle that was discovered would have the kind of characteristics that would be of great concern -- a capacity to fly beyond 150 kilometers and configuration which suggests that it would be entirely capable of carrying chemical and biological weapons," he said.

"When Secretary (of State Colin) Powell briefed the council on the 5th of February he pointed to the fact

Iraq had experimented and actually taken one of these vehicles on a 500 km trajectory,” Negroponte said. “So we think this is a matter of serious concern.”

DIPLOMATIC PROCESS CONTINUES ON IRAQ RESOLUTION, WHITE HOUSE SAYS

But “it must lead to immediate disarmament of Saddam Hussein”

By Wendy S. Ross
Washington File White House Correspondent

Washington -- The exact content of the resolution on Iraq to be voted on soon at the United Nations Security Council in New York “remains a matter of consultation and discussion among various nations,” White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer told reporters March 10.

“Ambassadors at the United Nations and others are in the final stages of diplomacy in New York, in anticipation of a vote that will take place this week,” he said.

“Some nations have suggested such things as benchmarks. There are ideas that are being explored and looked at. And so it is too soon to say what the final document that will be voted on will include. It’s too soon to say what the exact date will be,” he said.

“(C)onsultation is important, listening to the ideas of various nations is important” in the current “important phase of diplomacy,” Fleischer said. “That’s under way,” he said, but he had no indication “whether anything is final in the language that has been offered in the amended version of the resolution.”

Fleischer said the ongoing diplomatic efforts are “marked by some level of flexibility within the diplomacy. But the bottom line remains the same; it must lead to the immediate disarmament of Saddam Hussein.”

Fleischer said the White House is aware of the discovery of Iraqi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) by UNMOVIC -- the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission.

The U.S. is also aware of UNMOVIC’s discovery of Iraqi production of munitions capable of dispensing both chemical and biological weapons, he said.

The United States hopes to learn, at a closed-door meeting of the U.N. Security Council March 10, why the discovery of the undeclared weapons delivery systems was not addressed in weapons inspector Hans Blix’s March 7 oral presentation to the council, he said.

Some of the information, he said, was added “very late” as an appendix to the long report detailing the 29 clusters of unresolved disarmament issues that the U.N. weapons inspectors presented to the U.N. along with their presentations.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said March 10 that “further disclosures” are now coming to light “that are even beyond the scope of the report.”

He said there’s a chemical munition that Iraq has developed, based on South African cluster bomb technology but “modified in order to spray chemical weapons instead of operating as a cluster bomb. The inspectors have, I think, come across that in some of their inspections, and now we find there may be hundreds of these -- over a hundred of them, at least.

“So there are items being found by the inspectors that deserve the focus of the international community and should probably be discussed more and more with them up in New York. We think it is necessary for people to look at the totality of what the inspectors are presenting and what the inspectors are finding, and to look at it in some detail like this, in order to understand what’s really going on.”

Fleischer said given the fact that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction that are prohibited to him, “what’s at stake” in the current debate at the United Nations is “what is the lesson for the next country that has weapons of mass destruction or nuclear weapons, such as Iran or North Korea, where we fear they are developing their programs to have weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons? How then does the world enforce anti-proliferation arrangements if the methods set up by the international community are not effective? And that is being tested now with the United Nations Security Council. There are issues that need to be thought through, from an international point of view.”

If the United Nations does not act, he said, “there are other proliferators down the line who will celebrate the United Nations Security Council’s failure to back up its own resolutions.”

IRAN’S SECRET NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT BELIES “PEACEFUL PURPOSES” CLAIM

Boucher says no economic justification exists for Iran’s nuclear program

State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said today that Iran’s secret development of a nuclear fuel processing facility “refutes the claim that it was all for peaceful purposes.” Boucher was talking to reporters at the regular State Department noon briefing on March 10.

Boucher pointed out that there is no economic justification for such a program for a state, such as Iran, that is so rich in oil and gas. “Iran flares off more gas every year than they would ever get from these reactors that they’re talking about building.”

Pointing to Iran’s announcement that it would soon begin operating a uranium conversion facility to provide more material for the enrichment facility, Boucher said, “Iran and Russia agreed that Russia would provide all the fuel for the life of the reactor that’s under construction at Bushehr, and that Russia would take back any spent fuel. So again, that’s one more reason why they don’t need these other parts of the fuel cycle.”

“States with peaceful nuclear energy programs have nothing to hide from the international community and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran has done its best to hid these other nuclear fuel cycle activities,” Boucher said.

Iran was the only state that did not accept the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) call in 1992 for states to declare new nuclear facilities before construction. If Iran has now agreed to do so, Boucher said, “that would only be because of intense pressure.”

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